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ABSTRACT

This document presents the results of a survey conducted to determine whether students involved in student government view this work as a leisure or learning experience. A sample of 91 students at California State College, Long Beach were surveyed. Data were collected by means of a questionnaire that sought demographic information and attitudinal responses to a semantic differential scale. Results indicate that respondents view their student government experiences as learning experiences and not leisure pursuits. The bulk of students surveyed see their student government involvement relating to their future career plans and are there because they feel something is being learned. (Author/HS)

ED 062 915

COLLEGE STUDENT GOVERNMENT AS A LEISURE PURSUIT

BY

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COORDINATOR, STUDENT ACTIVITIES

CALIFORNIA STATE COLLEGE, LONG BEACH

JANUARY 1972

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this paper was to identify the ways in which participants in the California State College, Long Beach Associated Students government view their experiences. Of particular pertinence to this study was to discover if participants felt that their experiences were leisure pursuit activities in nature or learning experiences (educational) in nature. The researcher also wanted to find out why students choose to become involved in the Associated Students program.

Significance

College Student Government experiences have been considered co-curricular (leisure) activities for those who participate during their college years. With the increasing power and responsibilities that students are gaining in the areas of self-governance, determination of policies and fiscal management, it seems feasible that these experiences could be viewed as being more educational than co-curricular in nature.

College administrators at C.S.C.L.B. are currently looking into programs at other colleges and universities and are in the process of making recommendations that some form of class or unit credit be given to those students who are active in student government. Statistical information gathered from this inquiry will add credence to their recommendation.

Students involved in student government programs develop practical experience in the areas of management, leadership development, program implementation and evaluation, and legislative functions. This researcher feels that these experiences are better learned in an atmosphere of self-doing than in a typical class

room-lecture atmosphere. Student government involvement creates a learning laboratory climate. The amount of learning being gained through this lab experience, and the ways in which participants view their learnings are crucial to understanding, evaluation and developing the experiences more fully.

Scope

Those student who are presently active in the Associated Students programs at California State College, Long Beach were requested to participate in this study. Included were: elected officers; appointed administrators; elected members of the legislative body; appointed representatives; commissioners; and members of the judicial body.

Assumptions

It is assumed that those student who were surveyed are interested in the outcomes of this study. The researcher feels that in as much as college administrators are aware of the inquiry of this study and because the outcomes of the study are related to their research, they will take note of the data collected. It is further assumed that those student who completed the questionnaire, did so honestly.

Hypothesis

H_o Associated Students government experiences at C.S.C.L.B. are no more learning experiences in nature than leisure pursuit activities in nature.

H_1 Associated Students government experiences at C.S.C.L.B. are more learning experiences (educational) in nature than leisure pursuit activities in nature.

Definitions

Associated Students - referred to by the general student body and in this report as the A.S. The A.S. is the incorporated student association established in order to: (1) provide facilities and programs capable of satisfying the needs

and interests of all the members of this Association; (2) provide governmental administration and leadership development within a framework of student self-government; (3) insure the full and equal representation in the affairs and government of this Association and all its members; and (4) achieve a better awareness of, and competence in, the practices of democratic citizenship among the members of this Association.

Commissioner - appointed position of responsibility for coordinating, directing and evaluating a specific A.S. program, event or activity.

Educational experience - "those experiences which help the student realize his full potential in all aspects of his being."[1]

Executive officers - elected and appointed administrators.

Judicial - appointed chief justice and associated justices having the judicial authority of the A.S.

Leisure pursuit - an activity participated in during one's free time for relaxation. May be active or sedentary.

Senator - elected member of the legislative body who represents academic schools.

LITERATURE RELATED TO STUDY

Literature Related to Content

Research in the field of higher education is continually ongoing. This research related to Associated Students programs deals most with student power and the question of how much student legislative bodies should have. In terms of student opinion of student government experiences as they relate to leisure or learning; this researcher found very little information.

In a study for the council for the Advancement of Small Colleges conducted by Dennis Campagna, it was found that at schools where students feel that they have sufficient opportunity for fulfilling extra-curricular experiences they also feel that they are undergoing a fair amount of overall growth. Campagna found that there existed a definite relationship between experiences in the non-academic area of college and growth.[2]

"If the basic purpose of an institution of higher education is learning, then it would seem that this must also be one of the purposes for involving students in governance, i.e., for the educational value."[3]

Resources reviewed to assist the researcher in obtaining background information are indicated in the appendix of this report.

Literature Related To Method

The semantic differential scale, which was originated by C. E. Osgood, was used in this study after various scales for measuring attitudes, opinions and values were reviewed by the researcher.

PROCEDURE

Sampling

Those students who are currently involved in A.S. activities at C.S.C.L.B. were sent a questionnaire. This included those elected and appointed students to the areas of executive offices, members of the legislative body, representatives, commissioners and members of the judicial body. With the questionnaire, was a brief personalized letter of explanation and request to return the questionnaire to the researcher within ten days. Method of return was by utilizing

the inter-campus mail system, which is easily accessible to A.S. personnel. After the tenth day, the researcher made telephone calls to those who had not returned their questionnaires in order to increase the percentage of returns. Of 91 questionnaires sent; 56 were returned in time to be computed allowing a 62% rate of returns.

Collection of Data

Data were collected on a two-page questionnaire. The first page contained questions of demographic inquiry and short-answer. Detailed questions were avoided to lessen the ambiguity in responses. Careful attention was given to the type and number of questions asked because realizing that the respondents are busy, the researcher wanted to avoid asking unnecessary questions. An attempt toward keeping the questionnaire brief and readable was made feeling that that would increase the number of returns. Thought was given to the order in which questions were asked. The researcher avoided asking questions of age or number of units too early but started with questions that would encourage and stimulate interest in the total questionnaire.

The second part of the questionnaire contained a semantic differential scale and was used to measure the attitude of the respondent toward his view of A.S. functions. Many of the polar adjectives, along the seven-point scales, were taken from Osgood's Factor Analyzed Scale and the others were developed by the researcher. The favorable and unfavorable polar adjective pairs were arranged randomly in the right and left hand sides of the questionnaire in order to avoid position habits in the response pattern.

The questionnaire was pre-tested for clarity before the final printing and distribution.

Analysis of the Data

Once collected, the data was hand tabulated to frequency distributions of respondents' choices. Following this, percentages were tabulated and rounded off to the nearest whole number for use in this report. The researcher categorized questions two, three and nine into months, hours and years while tabulating results in order to allow for more clarity when describing the data.

The data shown in this report are frequency and percentage breakdowns of respondents' choices. Tables and graphs are used to assist the reader in understanding of the data.

Problems in Technique Encountered

In the lower right hand corner on the back side of the second page of each questionnaire, the researcher penciled in a small number which corresponded to a number beside the name of each intended respondent on an A.S. roster. The purpose of this number was to enable the researcher to remind only those students who had not returned their questionnaires, to do so; not those who already had done so. This small number was noticed and did produce some questions as to its purpose. This concerned the researcher as the questionnaire was not designed to compare students and their responses but as an anonomous tool for measuring attitudes.

On question number five, asking the respondent to check his present area of involvement, the category of Committee Chairman should have been omitted because in the October 1971 revision of the A.S. By-Laws, Chairman was changed to Commissioner.

FINDINGS

The data obtained in the questionnaire are reported in the following section of this report.

Fifty-six students (62%) completed the questionnaire and returned it in time to be included in the tabulation. Of these, 70% did not consider their involvement in the A.S. to be a leisure time activity and 25% did. Three per cent did not respond to this question.

In terms of how long respondents have been in their present A.S. position: 36% have been in from 1-5 months; 45% from 6-12 months; 18% from 13-24 months; and 2% for over 24 months.

The bulk of the respondents spend between one and ten hours per week in the duties of their position. This represents 53% of the total respondents. Another 27% spend between eleven and twenty hours per week; 4% between twenty-one and twenty-five hours; and 9% spend over twenty-five hours or more per week. Seven percent of the respondents indicated that their time spent varies. See Table I for more detail.

Table I

Hours Spent Per Week in Position

Hours	Frequency	Percent
1-5	13	23
6-10	17	30
11-15	8	14
16-20	7	13
21-25	2	4
Over 25	5	9
Hours Vary	4	7

The areas for involvement were: 16% Executive Officers; 18% Senators; 20% Academic Affairs; 11% Judicial; 29% Commissioners; 5% other categories and 2% did not respond.

Reasons for being involved in the A.S. were rated by the respondent giving his first, second and third choices. Table II shows the total number of times that each particular concept was indicated in the first three choices.

Table II

Reasons for Involvement in the A.S.

Total times indicated as 1 of 3 choices		No. of times 1st choice indicated	No. of times 2nd choice indicated	No. of times 3rd choice indicated	Other (indicated by check marks w/o rank listing)
12	I have the free time	1	4	5	2
3	It gives me social status		3		
39	I am learning something	10	18	8	3
31	I want to make changes	14	6	7	4
4	My friends participate	1		2	1
37	To become involved in campus activities	14	12	8	3

Thirty other reasons were listed for persons involvement and are indicated in the appendix of this report.

Seventy percent of respondents felt that their involvement in the A.S. is related to their future plans; 21% did not, while 9% failed to respond to this question. The researcher compiled a list of career objectives that respondents listed and it can be found in the appendix of this report.

Seventy-three percent of the respondents are male and 27% are female. Most respondents, 81% are between the ages of 20 and 25. Nine percent are sophomores; 21% juniors; 45% seniors; and 34% graduates. See Table III for more detail.

Table III

Personal Data of Respondents

Description	Frequency	Percent
Male	41	73
Female	15	27
Freshman	0	0
Sophomore	5	9
Junior	12	21
Senior	25	45
Graduate	19	34
Age:		
17-19	2	4
20-22	29	52
23-25	16	29
26-28	4	7
29-31	2	4
32 & older	3	5

Respondents viewed their involvement in A.S. functions as more important than unimportant; more free than constrained; more active than passive; more complex than simple; more serious than humorous; more successful than unsuccessful; more pleasurable than painful; more curricular than non-curricular; more work than play; more happy than sad; more relevant than irrelevant; more familiar than new; more unpredictable than predictable; more valuable than not valuable; more responsible than irresponsible; more difficult than easy; more educational than not educational; more exciting than dull; more meaningful than not meaningful; more progressive than traditional; more informal than formal; more academic than not academic; more open than closed; more positive than negative; more interesting

than boring; more permissive than restrictive, more genuine than false; and more school than not school.

On Table IV (on next page) is indicated the percentage and frequency distribution based upon the choices made by respondents. Key words have been underlined to show the way most of the respondents felt about the concept being evaluated.

Certain key words on the polar adjectives used on the semantic differential scale are of particular interest to the researcher as they relate to the educational or leisure value of A.S. functions as viewed by participants. These words and their percentage values are shown on the graphs below.

Figure 1

Percentage of Responses for the
Concept School-Not School

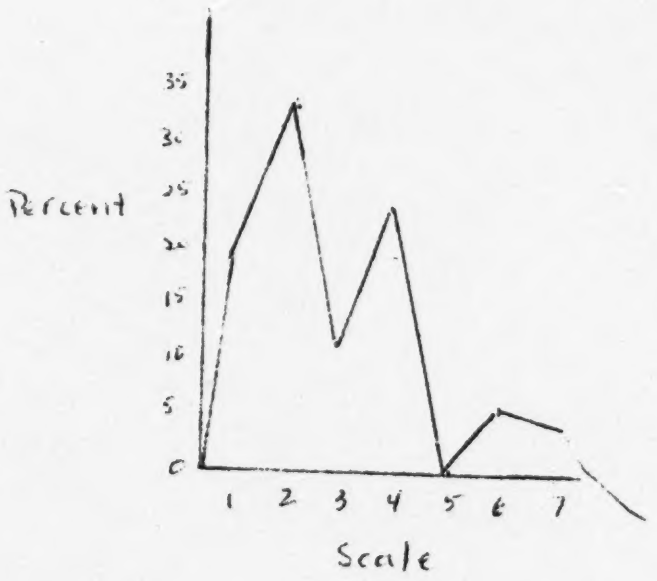

Table IV

Percentage and Frequency Distribution
of the Semantic Differential Scale Used for
Attitude Evaluation of A.S. Functions by Respondents

Concept		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No Response
Important	Unimportant	25% (14)	40% (22)	21% (12)	11% (6)	4% (2)			
Constrained	Free	2% (1)	9% (5)	13% (7)	13% (7)	16% (9)	29% (16)	14% (8)	5% (3)
Active	Passive	27% (15)	55% (31)	21% (12)	5% (3)	4% (2)	2% (1)		4% (2)
Complex	Simple	14% (8)	25% (14)	27% (15)	18% (10)	9% (5)	4% (2)	2% (1)	2% (1)
Humorous	Serious	7% (4)	7% (4)	14% (8)	20% (11)	16% (9)	14% (8)	20% (11)	2% (1)
Successful	Unsuccessful	16% (9)	38% (21)	29% (16)	7% (4)	5% (3)		4% (2)	2% (1)
Painful	Pleasurable		2% (1)	5% (3)	23% (13)	16% (9)	30% (17)	22% (12)	2% (1)
Curricular	Non Curricular	5% (3)	18% (10)	18% (10)	29% (16)	7% (4)	7% (4)	16% (9)	2% (1)
Work	Play	10% (6)	27% (15)	23% (13)	27% (15)	5% (3)	2% (1)	4% (2)	2% (1)
Happy	Sad	23% (13)	25% (14)	29% (16)	14% (8)	4% (2)		2% (1)	2% (1)
Relevant	Irrelevant	38% (21)	30% (17)	23% (13)	5% (3)	2% (1)			2% (1)
Familiar	New	16% (9)	13% (7)	14% (8)	18% (10)	14% (8)	7% (4)	16% (9)	2% (1)
Predictable	Unpredictable	5% (3)	18% (10)	16% (9)	18% (10)	18% (10)	16% (9)	9% (5)	4% (2)
Not valuable	Valuable			2% (1)	4% (2)	13% (7)	36% (20)	45% (25)	2% (1)
Responsible	Irresponsible	36% (20)	32% (18)	18% (10)	7% (4)	2% (1)	2% (1)		2% (1)
Easy	Difficult	7% (4)	2% (1)	11% (6)	20% (11)	38% (21)	9% (5)	11% (6)	2% (1)
Educational	Not Educational	46% (26)	32% (18)	18% (10)					4% (2)
Exciting	Dull	14% (3)	36% (20)	27% (15)	18% (10)	4% (2)			2% (1)
Not Meaningful	Meaningful			2% (1)	4% (2)	23% (13)	39% (22)	30% (17)	2% (1)
Traditional	Progressive		2% (1)	4% (2)	27% (15)	20% (11)	25% (14)	21% (12)	2% (1)
Formal	Informal	5% (3)	7% (4)	14% (8)	30% (17)	13% (7)	20% (11)	7% (4)	4% (2)
Not Academic	Academic	5% (3)	11% (6)	5% (3)	29% (16)	27% (15)	13% (7)	9% (5)	2% (1)
Open	Closed	23% (13)	30% (17)	23% (13)	9% (5)	4% (2)	4% (2)	2% (1)	5% (3)
Positive	Negative	39% (22)	38% (21)	13% (7)	9% (5)		2% (1)		2% (1)
Boring	Interesting			2% (1)	14% (8)	16% (9)	36% (20)	29% (16)	2% (1)
Permissive	Restrictive	7% (4)	14% (8)	13% (7)	36% (20)	18% (10)	5% (3)	4% (2)	5% (3)
Genuine	False	38% (21)	41% (23)	7% (4)	11% (6)	2% (1)			2% (1)
School	Not School	19% (11)	32% (18)	11% (6)	23% (13)		5% (3)	4% (2)	5% (3)

Figure 2

Percentage of Responses for the
Concept Curricular-Non Curricular

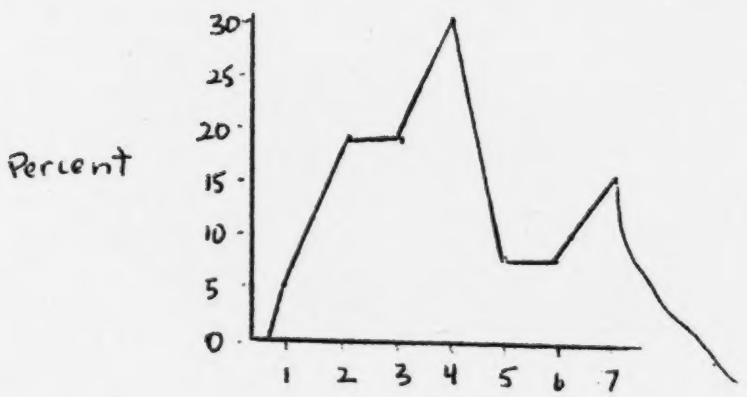

Figure 3

Percentage of Responses for the
Concept Academic-Not Academic

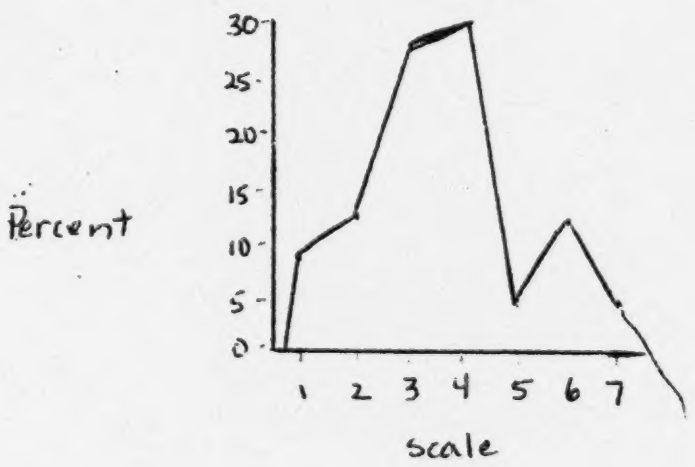

Figure 4

Percentage of Responses for the
Concept Educational-Not Educational

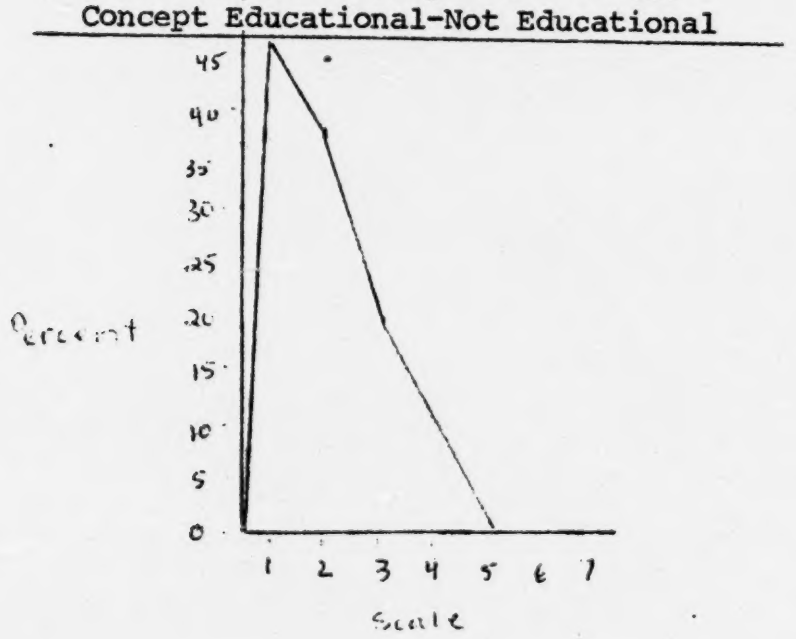

Figure 5

Percentage of Responses for the
Concept Important-Unimportant

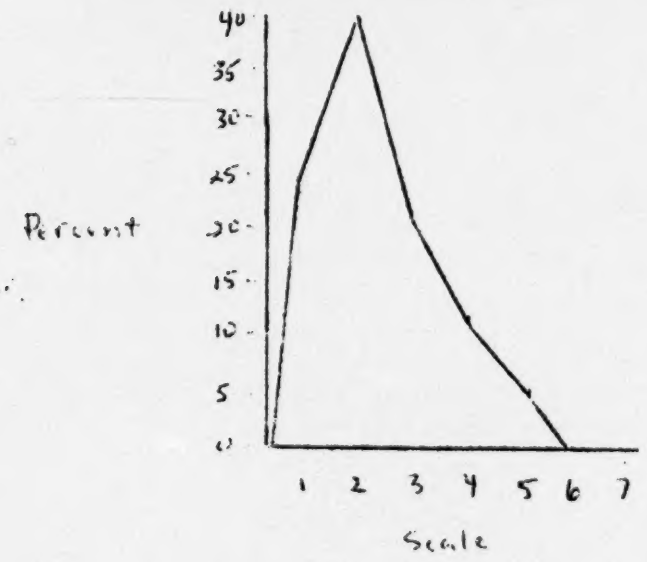

Figure 6

Percentage of Responses for the
Concept Relevant-Irrelevant

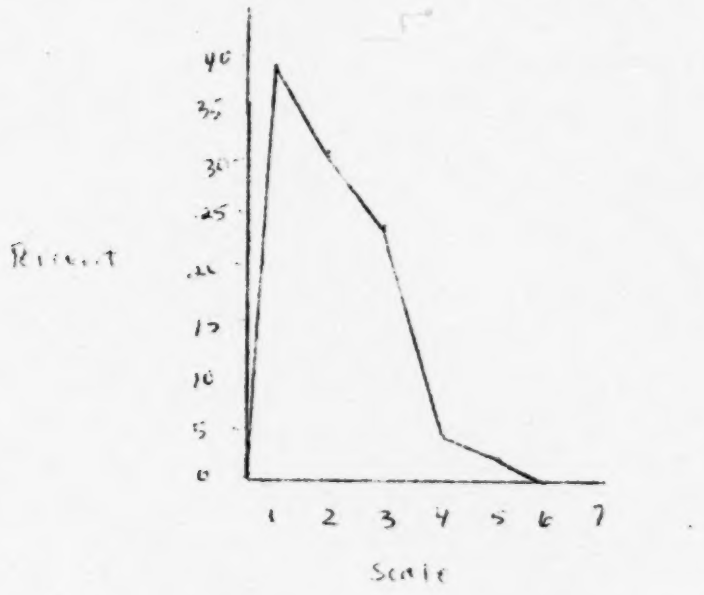

Figure 7

Percentage of Responses for the
Concept Responsible-Not Responsible

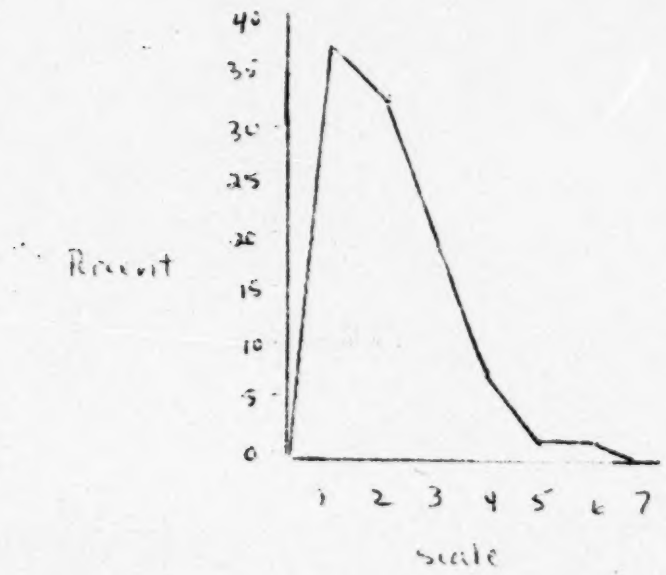

Figure 8

Percentage of Responses for the
Concept Valuable-Not Valuable

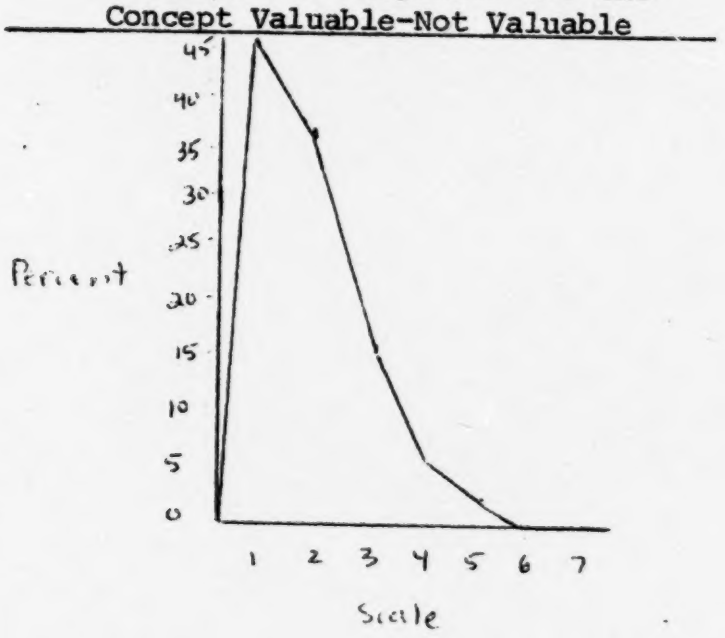

Figure 9

Percentage of Responses for the
Concept Work-Play

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Conclusions

In view of the preceding data, the following findings appear tenable.

1. Students active in A.S. programs at C.S.C.L.B. view their functions and experiences as learning experiences or educational in nature; not as leisure time pursuits.

2. The majority of these students see their involvement relating to their future career plans.

3. The reasons for involvement by participants are because they feel that they are learning something, because they choose to be involved and because they feel that they can make changes.

One student surveyed put it this way, "I find my involvement in the A.S. and other areas as fundamentally important to my concept of education. I am convinced that college as a classroom experience is too narrow for full development and as such ends up an irrelevant experience for many talented persons. Working in the A.S. seems to be the last chance a young man or woman has to risk himself with responsibilities and have the opportunity to experiment and fail with no strings attached before the pressures of salary and occupation make such experimentation and failure too risky to experience".

The researcher feels that the statistical data shown here in this report substantiates the hypothesis of this study.

Recommendation for Further Study

The researcher feels that the following recommendations for further study would be valuable.

1. Duplicating this study for participants in academic courses and comparing the results to the results of this study.

2. Duplicating this study among those active in A.S. functions at other colleges and universities in order to compare and to gain more support for the hypothesis.

3. Survey graduated students who were involved in A.S. functions while in college to discover how they now view their experiences in terms of being an educational or leisure pursuit.

It is further recommended that future studies of this nature be designed for machine tabulation in order to produce results which could be easily correlated and measured more significantly.

And finally, the researcher suggests that those who carry on further study in this area, re-evaluate the use of a seven-point polar adjective scale and compare its value to a five or three-point scale of measuring attitudes.

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2. ibid.

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APPENDIX A

Other Reasons for Involvement

Job to be done

Interest in projects

Relationship to persons particular
A.S. Task

Awareness of how bureaucracy functions

Improve campus

Task doing is useful

Challenge

Ability to do the task

Related to future

Represents department

To become involved with people

Like the people I meet

Leadership training

Fun

Pay dues

Feeling of accomplishment

End game playing in A.S.

Appointed

APPENDIX B

Future Plans of Respondents

Administration	1
Business	5
Counseling	3
Education	17
Engineering	4
Fine Arts	2
Law	9
Medical	2
Politics	2
Research	2
Science	1

APPENDIX C

1. Questionnaire
2. Letter sent

December 1, 1971

Dear

Would you take a few minutes to complete the enclosed questionnaire for me? I am doing a study for a graduate course on campus and am trying to measure how persons involved in Associated Students functions view their participation. Your input will be very valuable to this study because of your current involvement in A.S. programs.

After you have completed the questionnaire, please return it to me through the intercampus mail service or drop it by LA3-203 by Thursday, December 9.

Thank you in advance for helping. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at extension 9472.

Sincerely,

Gay Carpenter
Coordinator, Student Activities

/ob

ASSOCIATED STUDENTS SURVEY

1. Do you consider your involvement in the A.S. programs a leisure time activity?
   ____yes ____no

2. How long have you been in your present A.S. position? _____

3. Approximately how many hours per week do you spend in the duties of your position?
   _____

4. Have you been involved in any other A.S. positions? ____yes ____no If yes, which one(s)? _____
   _____
   _____

5. Check your present area of involvement:
   ____Executive Officer
   ____Senator
   ____Academic Affairs
   ____Judicial
   ____Commissioner
   ____Committee Chairman
   ____other (specify): _____
   _____

6. Rank your 1st, 2nd and 3rd reasons for being involved in the A.S.:
   ____I have the free time.
   ____It gives me social status.
   ____I am learning something.
   ____I want to make changes.
   ____My friends participate.
   ____To become involved in campus activities.
   ____other (specify): _____
   ____other (specify): _____
   ____other (specify): _____

7. What is your career objective? _____

8. Is what you are doing in the A.S. related at all to your future plans? ____yes ____no

9. Your age: _____ ____male ____female

10. Number of units enrolled this semester: ____

11. Class Standing: ___Freshman ___Sophomore ___Junior ___Senior ___Graduate

12. On the scale below, rate the concept, MY INVOLVEMENT IN A.S. FUNCTIONS IS, according to how you perceive it or feel towards it at this moment. Place an "X" somewhere along each of the seven-point scales between the pairs of words.

MY INVOLVEMENT IN A.S. FUNCTIONS IS:

important _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: unimportant
constrained _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: free
active _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: passive
complex _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: simple
humorous _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: serious
successful _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: unsuccessful
painful _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: pleasurable
curricular _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: non curricular
work _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: play
happy _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: sad
relevant _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: irrelevant
familiar _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: new
predictable _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: unpredictable
not valuable _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: valuable
responsible _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: irresponsible
easy _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: difficult
educational _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: not educational
exciting _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: dull
not meaningful _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: meaningful
traditional _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: progressive
formal _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: informal
not academic _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: academic
open _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: closed
positive _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: negative
boring _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: interesting
permissive _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: restrictive
genuine _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: false
school _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____: not school

Please feel free to write down any additional comments on the back that you think will be pertinent to the results of this study.

Thank you!